

Adam Pynacker

c. 1620–1673

PYNACKER'S approximate date of birth can be deduced from a document of 22 January 1652 in which he is recorded as being thirty-one years old. He was almost certainly born in Schiedam. Following the occupation of his father, Christiaan Pynacker, he first appears to have had a career as a wine merchant. In this capacity he traveled to Delft where he met the Delft innkeeper, painter, and art dealer Adam Pick (c. 1622–before 1666) who became a close associate of Pynacker's family. Only one painting by Pick survives, making it impossible to establish any stylistic influence he may have had on Pynacker, though he presumably helped him establish his career as a painter. Pynacker is recorded in Delft from 1649 to 1651 and in 1657. He seems to have worked frequently in that city, although he may have continued to live in Schiedam, where documents mention him in 1651, 1652, and 1658. In 1654 and 1655, Pynacker worked for the Brandenburg court at Lenzen in Germany. Several of his paintings appear in Delft inventories of the early 1650s, and in about 1653 the Delft painter Leonaert Bramer (1596–1674) sketched copies of three of his landscapes.

On 20 September 1658, Pynacker married Eva Maria de Geest, the daughter of the portrait painter Wijbrand de Geest (1592–after 1660). Upon his marriage he converted to Catholicism, and his two children were baptized as Catholics in Schiedam in 1660 and 1661. During the 1660s Pynacker moved to Amsterdam, where he is recorded in 1669 and 1671, although he is also documented in Schiedam again in 1670, the year of his last dated painting. He died in Amsterdam in March 1673.

Houbraken states that Pynacker spent several years in Italy. While his atmospheric, idyllic landscapes have a strongly Italianate character, no documentary evidence proves that he did indeed travel to Italy. He may have learned about the Italian *campagna* through the works of other artists, particularly Jan Asselijn (c. 1615–1652), Jan Both (c. 1615–1652), and Herman Saftleven (1609–1685), whose works seem to have been a source of inspiration. Nevertheless, Pynacker's landscapes are compositionally quite imaginative and adhere only rarely to the classical principles of composition favored by other Italianizing Dutch landscape painters. He also

executed a few series of large landscapes that were commissioned by wealthy merchants as decorative ensembles to adorn their town houses and country properties.

Bibliography

- Félibien 1666–1688, 5: 44.
Houbraken 1753, 2: 96–99.
Smith 1829–1842, 6 (1835): 285–300; 9 (1842): 750–755.
Blankert 1978a (1965): 184–194.
Amsterdam 1987: 394–402.
Harwood 1988.

1979.27.1 (2765)

Wooded Landscape with Travelers

late 1640s

Oil on canvas, 57 x 48 (22⁷/₁₆ x 18⁷/₈)

Gift of Ruth B. Benedict and Bertha B. Leubsdorf in memory of Sophie and Carl Boschwitz

Technical Notes: The support, a medium-weight, plain-weave fabric, has been lined with the right, left, and top tacking margins trimmed and the bottom tacking margin turned out and incorporated into the picture plane. A hard brittle layer of size is discernible below the thin, tan ground layer. Paint is applied as fluid pastes and stippling in the foliage.

The condition of the painting is only moderately good. The greens in the landscape, moreover, have darkened over time with the result that landscape details are not easy to distinguish and the sense of spatial recession has lessened. Discrete inpainting covers scattered small losses, and later repaint is found along the bottom edge. In 1978 the painting was lined and discolored varnish and retouching removed.

Provenance: (Galerie van Diemen, Berlin, 1925). Carl Boschwitz, New York. By inheritance to Dr. Ruth B. Benedict, Washington, and Bertha B. Leubsdorf, New York, in 1977.

THIS LANDSCAPE, which is neither signed nor dated, has been attributed to Pynacker by Bode, Nieuwstraten, and Harwood.¹ An early work, probably dating from the late 1640s,² it relates closely to a *Wooded Landscape with a Ford* (fig. 1) which Harwood dates about 1648.³ The stump in the foreground of the painting in the Museum Bredius, with its high projecting branch on the left and a lower branch on the right, is strikingly similar to the stump on the far



Fig. 1. Adam Pynacker, *Wooded Landscape with a Ford*, c. 1648, oil on panel, The Hague, Museum Bredius

bank in the *Wooded Landscape with Travelers*. The horizontal log with its lacelike branches is also very much like the boughs of the dead tree enclosed in lacy underbrush in the National Gallery painting. More significantly, the handling of space in these paintings is much the same. In both works the artist composed his scene with a series of planes approximately parallel to the picture plane. Furthermore, similar disparities of scale between the foreground and middle ground occur in the two works.

As an early painting, *Wooded Landscape with Travelers* is of considerable art historical interest. It demonstrates that characteristic features of Pynacker's style, particularly his use of light to accent figures and foliage and the lively rhythms of branches and trees and shrubbery, exist throughout his oeuvre. It also indicates that he was aware of recent developments in landscapes by Utrecht artists Jan Both, the most important of the Italianate artists, and Herman Saftleven. Pynacker may have learned from Jan Both how to use light as a unifying feature of his composition and as a means to accent forms, while the focus on a large tree stump resembles works by Herman Saftleven from the late 1640s.⁴

Notes

1. Wilhelm von Bode, director of the Prussian Royal Museums, 1906–1920, label attached to back of *Wooded Landscape with Travelers*, probably 1925. [Label reads: "Die vorstehend abgebildete Landschaft ist ein tüchtiges u. charakteristisches Bild der Adam Pynacker, von beste Erhaltung, W. V. Bode"]. See letter to purchaser Carl Boschwitz from Dr. Eduard Plietzsch, director, Galerie van Diemen, Berlin, 24 September 1925, in NGA curatorial files. J. Nieuwstraten, director, RKD, letter, 26 April 1979, also in NGA curatorial files. Harwood 1988, 113, no. 9.

2. This date is also proposed by Nieuwstraten letter, 26 April 1979. Harwood 1988, 113, no. 9, proposes c. 1649. Pynacker's earliest dated painting is 1650. See Harwood 1988, 18, no. 15.

3. Harwood 1988, 101, no. 4. Reproduced in Blankert 1978b, 102, where, however, Blankert suggests a date of 1650/1655.

4. See Saftleven's *Resting Riders in the Forest*, signed and dated 1647, Museum Bredius, The Hague. See Blankert 1978b or 1990, 197, cat. 145.

References

- 1988 Harwood: no. 9.
1994 Williamstown: no. 2, repro.



Adam Pynacker, *Wooded Landscape with Travelers*, 1979.27.1